



*Aldie Mill, Aldie, Virginia
Photo courtesy of: Paul Glenshaw*

Chapter 4

Historic Districts

Section 15.2-2283 of the Code of Virginia delegates to local governments the authority to enact zoning ordinances “to protect against the destruction of or encroachment upon historic areas”. The zoning authorized by the Code of Virginia is the enabling legislation for historic district zoning and is also known as overlay zoning since the regulation of historic resources is in addition to existing land use regulations.

In effect since 1972, the Historic District Ordinance of the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance) allows for the designation, review and protection of heritage resources through the creation of historic overlay districts. The Ordinance includes provisions for the creation of Historic and Cultural Conservation (HCC) Districts, Historic Site (HS) Districts, Historic Roadway (HR) Districts and Historic Access Corridor (HAC) Districts, which are generally referred to as county Historic Districts. The Ordinance mimics the criteria of the National Register and Virginia Landmarks Register and expands these with basic criteria for the determination of local significance. (Refer to Appendix C: Section 6-1800 Historic Districts, Loudoun County Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance)

Loudoun County currently administers six Historic and Cultural Conservation (HCC) Districts-Aldie, Bluemont, Goose Creek, Oatlands, Taylorstown and Waterford. These six historic districts are listed on the National Register and Virginia Landmarks Register. Historic Site (HS) Districts are used to designate individual properties. Only two properties are currently listed as HS Districts in the County namely, Welbourne and the Ruins of the Broad Run Bridge and Toll House, both of which are listed in the National Register and Virginia Landmarks Register. The County also administers one Historic Roadway (HR) District known as the Beaverdam Creek Historic Roadway District, in the southwestern portion of the County. There are currently no roadway corridors listed as Historic Access Corridor (HAC) Districts in the County. (*see Appendices A6 – A12*)

A seven-member Historic District Review Committee (HDRC) administers the County’s historic districts. The review by the HDRC is intended to ensure architectural compatibility and harmony within these districts. The HDRC review is based on the County’s Historic District Guidelines adopted as part of the Ordinance in 1987. Updating the Guidelines is on the HDRC’s 2008 work program. The Historic District Guidelines are available to the public as a guide for the renovation of existing structures and/or new construction projects. (Refer to Appendix D: Section 6-300 Historic District Review Committee, Loudoun County Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance)

While the County has the authority under State Enabling Legislation to create and administer historic overlay districts, there are issues of concern associated with the current ordinance language as it pertains to the owner consent requirements for the creation of a historic district, district boundaries and the Historic District Guidelines.

While the Ordinance allows for the creation and review of new county administered historic districts, this regulatory zoning tool is underutilized. Until a text amendment in the year 2000, the Ordinance required a signed affidavit of consent from every property owner within a proposed historic district boundary. This requirement seriously constrained the County’s ability to recognize and protect the historic integrity of a district, as districts are fragmented and include within their boundaries properties that are not part of the district. This can be seen in the existing Aldie Historic District, the Bluemont Historic District and the Goose Creek Historic District. The County Ordinance currently requires two-thirds of the owners within a proposed historic district to consent to the proposal to adopt a historic district. This new “super-majority” provision allows for the creation of historic districts that include all the lands within the proposed district boundary. The Ordinance also empowers the County’s Historic District Review Committee to “propose the establishment of additional historic overlay districts and revisions to the existing historic overlay districts.” The provision allows the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors to reconsider existing fragmented districts. The newly established Beaverdam Creek Historic Roadways District is eligible for this remedy.

The boundaries of the County historic districts and those of the state and National Register historic districts do not align in the Aldie, Bluemont, Goose Creek and Waterford Historic Districts. and the County's Revised General Plan calls for actions to rectify these boundary discrepancies.

"The boundaries of the County's Historic Cultural Conservation Districts will be amended or extended to coincide with the boundaries of the state's corresponding Historic Districts. This applies to Bluemont, Goose Creek, and Waterford. The County will work with the state to extend the state registered boundary of Aldie to meet the County Aldie Historic District boundary." (Revised General Plan, Policy 15, p. 5-36) Waterford Mill Waterford Post Office

Policies in the Revised General Plan also called for updates to the current Historic District Guidelines that were adopted in 1987. This is especially a concern for the rural Goose Creek Historic District. This district, encompassing more than 10,000 acres of land, was formed to protect and enhance the rural agricultural landscape of the area, which has gradually been changed through the years by the influx of residential construction.

"The Historic District Guidelines will be updated to include new districts as they are established and to recognize and give appropriate importance to the rural-suburban character of the Goose Creek Historic District." (Revised General Plan, Policy 14, p. 5-36)

Historic District Policies

1. The boundaries of the County's Historic Cultural Conservation Districts will be amended or extended to coincide with the boundaries of the state's corresponding Historic Districts. This applies to Bluemont, Goose Creek, and Waterford. The County will work with the state to extend the state registered boundary of Aldie to meet the County Aldie Historic District boundary.
2. The Historic District Review Committee will work on updating the Historic District Guidelines. Subsequent reviews and updates should be conducted on a five-year schedule. Revisions should ensure that the guidelines continue to meet the goals of the districts, reflect changing development patterns, and avail themselves of new and emerging technologies that can enhance resource identification, preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, etc.
3. The County will provide technical assistance and guidance to those citizens groups, villages, and towns that are interested in creating additional County Historic Districts.
4. The County will identify additional areas for the creation of County Historic Districts based on criteria defined in the Loudoun County Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance.
5. All sellers will be required to notify prospective purchasers of properties located in and/or contiguous to a County administered Historic District and of the requirements of a Certificate of Appropriateness (CAPP) for any proposed construction and/or alterations to properties located within the historic district.
6. Information and disclosures about historic districts shall be made readily available through County information systems.

Implementation

The Heritage Preservation Plan identifies the re-aligning of the boundaries of the county historic districts to match federal and state historic district boundaries to be a priority. The current mismatch in the boundary leaves the National and State Register historic districts exposed to incompatible development patterns that may detract from the historic authenticity of the resource and its natural and cultural setting. The update of the existing Historic District Guidelines is another key implementation step identified in this Plan. The HDRC should be responsible for updating those guidelines.

